



Clintonville, Ohio North High Street Corridor

Market Study and Action Plan Executive Summary

Prepared and Assembled by
Main Street Connections, LLC

In Association with
**Kinzelman Kline Gossman
Boulevard Strategies**

In Cooperation with
**The City of Columbus, Department of Trade and Development
The Clintonville Area Chamber of Commerce**

North High Street Corridor Clintonville

Market Strategy and Action Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Project Background

The five-mile square area that would eventually contain Clintonville was surveyed as part of the 1796 U.S. Military District and named Clinton Township. Large tracts of land were given to Revolutionary War veterans and quickly divided into smaller parcels for settlers who began to arrive in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The beginnings of an urban neighborhood were formed in the 1840's with a concentration of businesses to serve area farmers located in the vicinity of what is now known as Oakland Park Avenue and High Street.

Residential development generally proceeded northward from the urban center of Columbus as transportation and schools became available. In 1870, the city limit of Columbus touched Arcadia Avenue, generally considered to be the southern boundary of Clintonville. By 1910, the city limit was up to Oakland Park Avenue and eventually reached Chase Road, the southern boundary of Worthington, in 1956.

In the 1960's and 1970's, the post-World War II housing boom spread well beyond Clintonville. New freeways and large shopping centers were constructed at the edges of the metropolitan area. It became increasingly difficult for neighborhood stores to compete with the wide selection and low prices offered in many of these centers. For a time, even the residential neighborhoods seemed to be losing the competitive battle to new housing developments on the fringe.

As development has spread further from the center of Columbus and brought with it congestion and greater travel distances, Clintonville has once again become a popular area of the city in which to live. For many people, its charming older homes, tree-lined neighborhood streets, and numerous parks and ravines offer an appealing alternative to the impersonal neighborhoods with no sidewalks, no front porches and no stores within walking distance that represent much of what has arisen in suburban areas.

Unfortunately, Clintonville's commercial corridors along High Street and Indianola Avenue have not experienced the same recovery. Indianola, especially, continues to suffer from dilapidated commercial structures and high vacancy rates. High Street, the primary commercial corridor of Clintonville, suffers from its four-mile length, lack of an identifiable center, inconsistent and often suburban development patterns and insensitive zoning.

The city of Columbus, in cooperation with the Clintonville Area Chamber of Commerce, solicited proposals recently from qualified firms to develop a market strategy and action plan for the North High Street Corridor in the area of north Columbus known as Clintonville. To speed the planning process and encourage more creativity and community input, the city's Department of Trade and Development decided to try a new approach for this project that combined community focus group interviews, detailed market analysis, and a day long work session with a panel of local experts. Main Street Connections, LLC, in association with Kinzelman Kline Gossman and Boulevard Strategies, was selected to lead the process and develop final recommendations, incorporating input from the focus groups and the expert panel, for the revitalization of the commercial corridor.

Included in this Executive Summary are an overview of the focus group findings, summary of the market analysis for the Clintonville/High Street Corridor market analysis, description of the recommendations arising from the panel session with local experts, and Main Street Connections' supplemental recommendations for the revitalization of the North High Street Corridor.

II. OVERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

During two group sessions held in August, residents, property owners, and officials from the Clintonville Chamber of Commerce, Clintonville Area Commission, City of Columbus, Clintonville churches and schools identified the Clintonville community's strengths and weaknesses in addition to the opportunities and threats that face the area. Each attribute or issue was ranked in accordance with the number of times it was identified as being one of the most significant attributes or issues for the Clintonville community. The characteristics most often identified are listed below.

Strengths:

1. Well-Educated, Involved, Active Citizens
2. Strong Residential Building Stock (i.e. Quality, Character, and Value)
3. Residential Stability
4. Ideal Location (i.e. Proximity to Downtown, Health Care Facilities, etc.)

Weaknesses:

1. Unmet Shopping Needs
2. Scattered, Disconnected Business District that Lacks Identity
3. Parking Problems
4. Exploitive and/or Absentee Landlords
5. Vacant and Poorly Maintained Properties

Opportunities:

1. Unmet Shopping Needs
2. Vacant Areas' Redevelopment Potential (i.e. Graceland, Indianola, etc.)
3. Increased Transportation Possibilities
4. Morse-Bethel Connector
5. Anticipated High Street Improvements

Threats:

1. Perception or Reality of Urban Problems
2. Lack of Actionable Plan (i.e. Lack of a Development Entity or Manager)
3. Absentee Landowners
4. Continued Delay in Resolution of Morse-Bethel/Graceland Issue

III. SUMMARY OF MARKET ANALYSIS

- Clintonville merchants on average, draw the majority of their customers from outside of the Clintonville District itself. A Regional Trade Area, defined for the purposes of this study is bounded by:
 - State Route 161 to the north
 - Interstate 71 to the east
 - Lane Avenue to the south
 - Kenny and Linworth Roads to the west
- Clintonville merchants also draw from other areas of Greater Columbus that share similar lifestyle characteristics such as Grandview, Victorian and Italian Villages, Worthington, Upper Arlington, Bexley, German Village, Northwest Columbus, The University District, and other upscale/urban neighborhoods.
- The Clintonville District has a current estimated population of 24,636 persons in 11,498 households while the Regional Trade Area for Clintonville retailers consists of an estimated 75,629 persons in 34,884 households. Both consist of small household sizes and both are experiencing flat to slow growth.
- Compared to Franklin County benchmarks, the Regional Trade Area and Clintonville itself have lower proportions of children ages 5-17 and higher proportions of seniors.
- Both the Clintonville District and the Regional Trade Area are very white collar with high levels of education (about half of adults have a college degree) and large percentages of professional and technical occupations.

- Clintonville is one of the most affluent sections of Columbus and ranks well above Franklin County standards in terms of average and median household incomes. Its 1998 median household income is \$51,587, 27% above the Franklin County median (\$40,513). The Regional Trade Area's income distribution is more in line with Franklin County averages, perhaps reflecting the student-oriented neighborhoods south of Clintonville.
- Clintonville residents spent an estimated \$300 million on retail purchases in 1998. Above-average proportions of their retail dollars are spent on pharmacy and health and beauty aid items, cards and gifts, home furnishings, household goods, hardware and paint, women's apparel, men's apparel, jewelry, consumer electronics, books and magazines, sit-down restaurants and bars, and specialty foods and desserts.
- Residents of the Regional Trade Area spent an estimated \$750 million on retail purchases in 1998. Regional Trade Area households spend above-average proportions of their retail dollars on pharmacy and health and beauty aid items, cards and gifts, consumer electronics, sporting goods, books and magazines, compact discs and videotapes, sit-down restaurants and bars, movie theatres, and specialty foods and desserts

IV. EXPERT PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The expert panel was asked to focus on six topic areas that ranged from market opportunities and strategies to organization, implementation, and funding issues. Following are the discussion topics along with summarized panel comments and recommendations.

Topic 1: Market Opportunities and Strategies

- Focus on retail and residential space versus office space.
- Protect existing office uses.
- Interrupt commercial strips with high density residential, if possible. Current property values are too high for new residential use.
- Create multiple and distinct retail districts or nodes with different tenant mixes, appearance, image, etc. Focus development efforts on these nodes first.
- Make the vicinity of High Street and North Broadway Clintonville's "town center."
- Make attracting quality restaurants a top priority because of their ability to serve as anchors that would attract other new retail uses. Currently a shortage of sit-down restaurants exists.

- Gain the ability to serve liquor in dining establishments. A big name restaurant may need to commit to a Clintonville location before the public can be convinced to changing their views on strict liquor control.
- Possibly pursue the attraction of chain “big box” retail north of Morse Road.
- Add new stores to existing home related and antiques categories to create destination nodes.
- Contemporary chain specialty stores may be possible to attract at some point. However, attracting them would require property assemblage, image change and clear demonstration of success potential.
- Area needs entertainment destinations. Explore opportunities for alternative entertainment uses for existing properties within target districts, e.g. community theater.
- Focus first on creating a sense of place along the corridor then on merchant recruitment.
- Current store hours are too limited and should be expanded.

Topic 2: Physical Environment, Appearance, and Resources

- The recently enacted Urban Commercial Overlay District, which extends from Arcadia to Morse Road excluding the area in the vicinity of Whetstone Park, is a very positive first step. Within this district, any new development must be pedestrian-oriented with such things as 0-10’ setback, first floor transparency and complementary design.
- Explore the potential for “urban-friendly” redevelopment of stores including but not limited to Kroger and Big Bear that would allow these stores’ redevelopment to compliment surrounding store designs in areas such as uniform setbacks, rear parking, etc.
- Possibly augment the Urban Commercial Overlay District with a Design Review Panel.
- The High Street Improvement Project authorizes streetscape improvements on High Street from Arcadia Avenue north to Torrence Avenue. Future improvement plans along the Clintonville corridor should consider accomplishing the following tasks:
 - Either bury or relocate overhead wires along the entire corridor to improve its appearance.
 - Decisions regarding design objectives and solutions should be driven by the community.
 - See Topic 5, Transportation and Parking regarding traffic calming recommendations related to streetscape improvements.
- The city’s Historic Preservation Office has drafted a proposal to create conservation districts where local neighborhoods would be able to identify specific environmental characteristics in order to maintain the general quality and appearance of their neighborhoods.
- Limited lot sizes are an impediment to redevelopment that would, in many cases, require assemblage of multiple contiguous properties to address.

- Signage and amenities such as trash receptacles, benches, etc. are very limited and unattractive. They should be increased and enhanced.

Topic 3: Length, Disconnectedness and Lack of Identity along Corridor

- No physical sense of arrival exists upon entering Clintonville or areas of commercial concentration within it. This issue needs to be addressed with signage and design elements.
- Because the North High Street Corridor through Clintonville is four miles long, it is difficult, and perhaps inappropriate, to make encompassing observations or recommendations that would apply to the entire corridor.
- Opportunities exist to define, refine and enhance certain retail nodes/districts to establish clear destination areas within the commercial corridor with distinct identities. A focus should be made on four key nodes for maximum impact that would include a Town Center District (Torrence to Como), South Clintonville/North Campus District (Arcadia to just north of Olentangy Village), Beechwold District, and the Henderson/Cook Road District.

Topic 4: Relationship to Surrounding Neighborhoods and Communities

- Use streetscape and other physical improvements to create a stronger link to the North Columbus/campus area.
- Create stronger pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the Olentangy River corridor and High Street at key points by utilizing such tools as signage, bike lanes, bike paths, etc.
- Strengthen physical and visual connections to nearby destinations and amenities such as Olentangy Village and the five ravines that intersect with High Street along the corridor.
- Encourage pedestrian friendly enhancements along High Street to draw pedestrians from adjacent neighborhoods.
- See Topic 5, Transportation and Parking regarding suggested transit enhancements to encourage stronger linkages between downtown and Worthington through Clintonville.

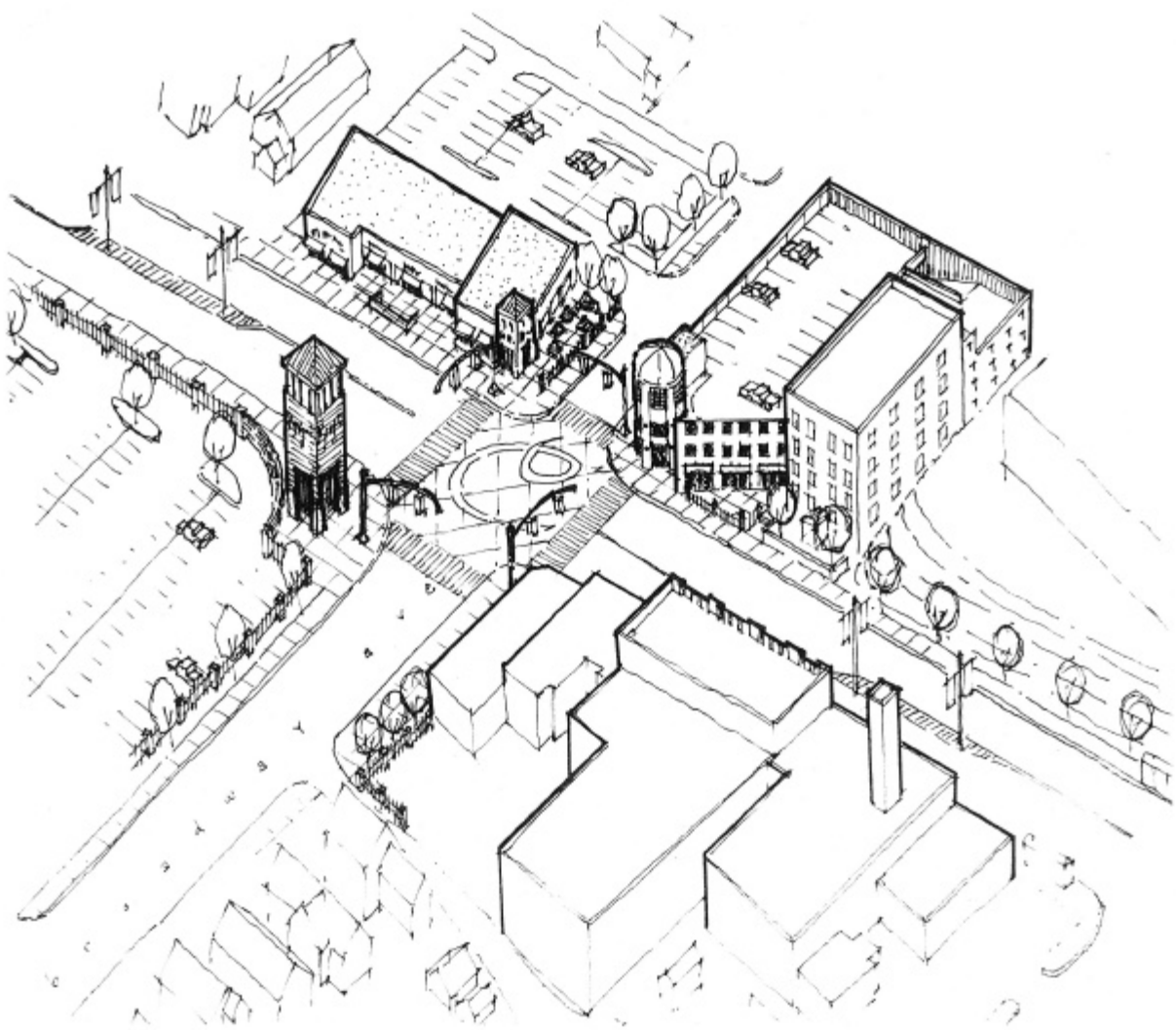
Topic 5: Transportation and Parking

- Vehicular traffic along High Street through Clintonville should be slowed through key districts using traffic calming techniques such as angled parking, boulevards, elimination of turn lanes, wider sidewalks, etc.
- Explore options such as a trolley or urban shuttle for guided transit along High Street between downtown and Worthington.
- Ample parking will be important to the success of proposed commercial districts. Identify and pursue opportunities to provide additional, perhaps public, parking

in these areas through the purchase of vacant lots or upgrades and additions to parking areas located behind buildings.

Topic 6: Organization, Implementation, and Funding Issues

- The current tax structure provides little incentive for property owners to make improvements to their properties.
- A strong grass-roots effort will be necessary to direct revitalization efforts. Clintonville area organizations should be brought together into some sort of a steering committee to direct efforts.
- Assemble a comprehensive list of High Street property owners including names and addresses.
- A non-profit 501(c) 3 should be established to oversee the effort and encourage tax-deductible contributions. Consideration should be given to patterning the organization after the National Main Street Center's four-point Main Street Program.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a Community Development Corporation and encouraging private sector developer participation and assistance.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a Special Improvement District.
- A spirited, well-organized fund raising effort will be required to implement recommended improvements. Models or renderings that help people visualize the possibilities will be important.
- Approach area foundations for assistance in addressing the problems of first ring suburbs and neighborhoods.
- Identify and recruit Clintonville community leaders who think big and are visionaries.
- Develop an assistance program to help strengthen existing merchants.
- Use portions of this study as a marketing tool.
- Early efforts should include contacting key priority property owners with elements of the plan to encourage their support and involvement.
- One or more catalytic projects of sufficient size and scale to change the image of the area may be necessary before aggressive retail recruitment can take place.
- A ninety-day timeline and budget should be established for beginning the implementation phase of the plan.



North Broadway & High Intersection

V. OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The summary of the Recommended Action Plan that follows is based upon recommendations received from focus group and panel recipients, as well as Main Street Connections' experience, the experiences of other communities and the particular set of circumstances and opportunities identified through intensive local research. It is intended to serve as a road map for the future direction of the corridor. It is meant to be comprehensive yet flexible to adapt to community input and changing circumstances. Key objectives have been prioritized in general order of importance.

Following are Main Street Connections' recommended prioritized objectives for the comprehensive revitalization of Clintonville North High Street Corridor:

#1 Put the necessary organization, funding and staffing in place to implement the plan.

- **Establish a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit corporation as the new organizational structure for implementing the Recommended Action Plan.**
- **Pattern the not-for-profit organization after the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Program that capitalizes on overlooked and underutilized assets, encourages imagination, sharpening or entrepreneurial skill, and a strong participation by the private sector.**
- **Form a board of trustees for the new organization.**
- **Involve existing Clintonville area organizations.**
- **Establish and fund a three-year operating budget for the organization.**
- **Hire full-time staff to manage the organization and direct the implementation of the Recommended Action Plan.**
- **Establish a permanent office on High Street within the corridor for the Main Street Corporation.**
- **Initiate a public relations campaign for the purposes of keeping the community informed and building support and momentum for the revitalization effort.**

#2 Create a strong sense of identification and entry into Clintonville and four targeted districts within the corridor.

- **Create one or more unified destination retail and/or entertainment clusters or districts within the corridor.**
- **Develop and implement a comprehensive directional/way-finding signage program.**
- **Upgrade and sign the major entrances leading into Clintonville.**

#3 Identify and develop catalytic projects to demonstrate the viability of new restaurant and retail uses and the impact of appropriately designed and located facilities.

- **To attract new restaurants, it will be essential that local resistance to liquor permit options be addressed.**
- **Explore potential alternative uses (i.e. community entertainment) for distinctive, historic buildings.**
- **Approach major property owners and retailers, especially Big Bear and Kroger, about the possibility of redeveloping their sites and stores to better complement their surroundings and encourage additional retail development.**

#4 Dramatically improve the appearance and vehicular and pedestrian access and flow of the North High Street Corridor.

- **Establish a higher standard of maintenance, cleanliness, and design.**
- **Implement proposed streetscape improvements along the corridor.**
- **Bury utility wires underground along the corridor or move them to back alleys.**
- **Upgrade amenities such as trash receptacles and benches.**

- **Encourage building facade enhancements.**
- **Identify potential funding assistance and incentives.**
- **Strengthen local design review.**
- **Extend the Urban Overlay District to the area from just north of Graceland Shopping Center to the southern boundary of Worthington.**
- **Introduce traffic calming techniques in designated target districts.**
- **Improve pedestrian access to and flow within the North High Street Corridor.**
- **Connect High Street to the Olentangy River bike path at strategic locations and encourage bicycles to venture onto High Street.**
- **Explore additional transit options.**

#5 Improve the perception and reality of ample, convenient and available parking, especially within target districts.

Parking is a top priority both because it was one of the biggest complaints of area merchants and community leaders interviewed for this report and because other initiatives to be recommended will depend upon satisfactory resolution of this problem.

- **Improve parking availability by creating additional lots in target districts behind buildings or on the edges of each district. Improve existing parking lots that exist behind buildings.**
- **Initiate a positive promotional campaign to encourage corridor workers to reserve street front parking for shoppers and visitors.**
- **Install directional signage that directs visitors to public parking areas.**
- **Use decorative perimeter fencing and plantings to improve the image of off-street parking.**

#6 Gradually add appropriate new retail within designated target districts while strengthening existing retail.

- **The attraction of dining establishments should be a priority because of the demand for such establishments and their ability to serve as anchors.**
- **Antiques and home goods stores should be added to the already existing concentration of them in order to develop a regional destination for home furnishings.**
- **Specialized fashion retail would require a large critical mass to successfully execute because they are driven more by selection than by price or location.**
- **Recruitment efforts should be supplemented with the development of a marketing package, mailings to tenant prospects, and events such as franchise fairs.**
- **Existing retail should be strengthened by merchant seminars that deal with topics such as visual merchandising, window display, customer service, marketing/promotions, inventory control, etc.**
- **Increase local market penetration by expanding store hours of operation, engaging in joint promotions and marketing efforts, expanding Clintonville's special events, and developing promotions targeting area daytime workers.**

#7 Provide property owners with the tools and incentives to rehabilitate their historic buildings.

Property owners and developers often perceive that preservation is too expensive, especially in comparison to new construction. In actuality when historic preservation methods are properly understood and applied, such developments can actually cost less and earn a higher rate of return than new construction.

Clintonville is blessed with numerous beautiful and distinctive historic buildings, many of which are located on High Street. It also has the benefit of knowledgeable local preservation advocates that can be of immeasurable value in implementing the following recommendations.

- **Conduct seminars for property owners regarding such issues as the alternative building code for older structures, historic tax credits, creative financing, etc.**
- **Create a package of incentives and assistance programs for High Street property owners that encourage upgrading and/or adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings.**
- **Develop a facade enhancement program that would be sponsored by the proposed Main Street organization to achieve dramatic improvements in the appearance of some sections of High Street.**
- **Utilize the Neighborhood Design Assistance Center to encourage appropriate building enhancements.**
- **Approach local financial institutions about the development of a low interest loan pool that would be utilized to finance the redevelopment of existing properties.**
- **Encourage appropriate infill projects that meet Urban Commercial Overlay Standards on select empty lots along the corridor.**

V. NEXT STEPS

- Hold organizational meeting for new 501(c)3 non-profit corporation to oversee plan implementation.
 - Invite representatives of Clintonville Area Commission, Clintonville Area Chamber of Commerce, other Clintonville-based community organizations, city of Columbus, leading property owners, businesses and residents
 - Identify and recruit leaders/officers
 - Identify existing 501(c) 3 to act as fiscal agent
 - Seek in-kind legal services to complete application process
- Establish three-year budget and initiate fund raising.
- Evaluate alternative approaches to zoning, liquor options, design review, etc.
- Prepare marketing materials for use in fund raising and tenant and developer recruitment.
- Approach existing and potential anchor retailers and restaurants regarding development opportunities, seek commitments, then use these commitments to gain approval of recommended zoning/liquor option changes.
- Design, fund and implement comprehensive signage program.
- Design, fund and implement physical enhancements to High Street/North Broadway retail district.